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ABSTRACT

This research was undertaken to understand grade 3 students and teachers in Texas more fully and to explore the relationships between student characteristics, teaching practices, and materials in grade 3 classrooms and student performance in grade 3. Survey data was received from teachers for 7,216 students from 93 campuses and 72 districts around the state. This report looks at characteristics of Texas third graders, such as gender, ethnicity, English proficiency, economic status, and performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Third-grade teachers are also profiled. The report also presents teacher assessments of academic readiness, classroom behaviors, academic growth, and performance. Program services, instructional methods, and classroom practices are detailed, as well as teaching materials and computer use. Findings indicate that the majority of third graders began the year ready for the academic demands of third grade. Most teachers use a diverse set of teaching practices. Teachers reported that the majority of students mastered most or all of the Essential Elements in seven subject areas, and the majority of students with high perceived mastery passed the TAAS reading and mathematics tests. Three appendixes contain a table of teacher characteristics and assessments of students and the questionnaires about teacher and student characteristics. (Contains 8 tables and 19 references.) (Author/SLD)

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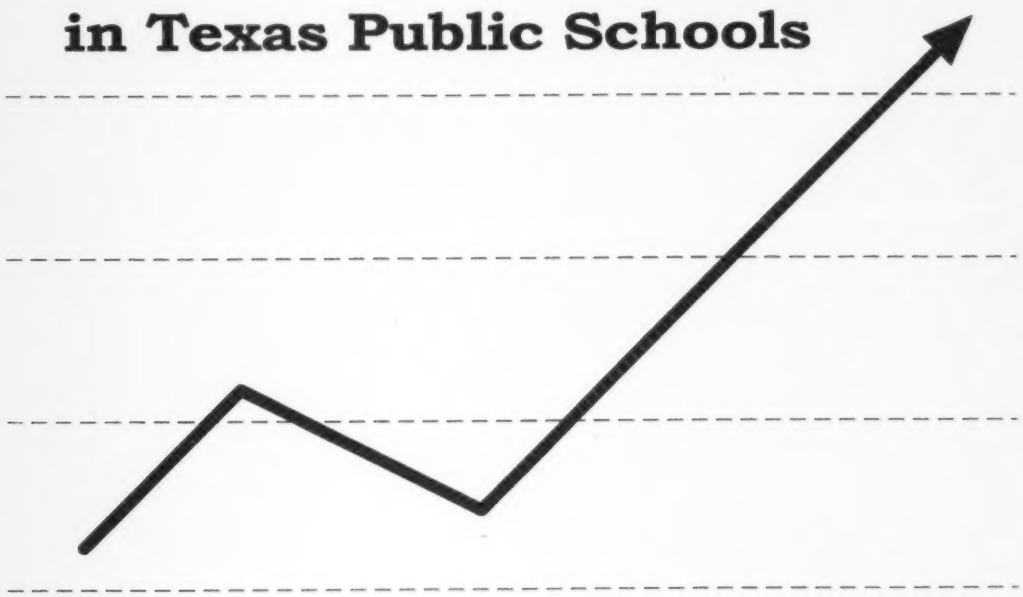
Grade 3 Classrooms and Student Performance in Texas Public Schools



STATEWIDE TEXAS EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS STUDY

REPORT NO. 6A **DECEMBER 1999**

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ERRATA

Please note that Table 6 on page 19 contains an error. Of students retained in Grade 3, the percentage who mastered most or all of the Essential Elements in mathematics should be 18% (not 54%, as currently stated in the report).

Several errors also appear in Table A1 of Appendix A. A corrected version of STEPS Report No. 6A is available on the TEA website (www.tea.state.tx.us/research). For further information, please contact the Division of Research and Evaluation at (512) 475-3523.

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Abstract. This research was undertaken to more fully understand Grade 3 students and teachers in Texas, and to explore the relationships between student characteristics, teaching practices, and materials in Grade 3 classrooms and student performance in Grade 3. As a follow-up to the work that began during the 1995-96 school year with Grade 1, this study focuses on survey information provided by Grade 3 teachers from selected schools statewide during the 1997-98 school year. Survey data was received for 7,216 students from 93 campuses and 72 districts around the state. This report looks at characteristics of Texas third graders, such as gender, ethnicity, English proficiency, economic status, and performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Third-grade teachers are also profiled. In addition, the report presents teacher assessments of students' academic *readiness*, classroom behaviors, academic growth, and performance. Program services, instructional methods, and classroom practices are detailed, as well as teaching materials and computer use.

Findings indicate that the majority of third graders began the year *ready* for the academic demands of third grade. Most teachers use a diverse set of teaching practices. Teachers reported that the majority of students mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in seven subject areas, and the majority of students with high perceived mastery passed the TAAS reading and mathematics tests.

Keywords. *third grade, elementary education, teaching methods, elementary teachers*

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Grade 3 Classrooms and Student Performance in Texas Public Schools

STATEWIDE TEXAS EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS STUDY

REPORT NO. 6A DECEMBER 1999

Commissioner of Education
Jim Nelson

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Office of Policy Planning and Research
Criss Cloudt
Associate Commissioner

Research and Evaluation Division
Maria D. Whitsett
Director

Nancy J. Smith
Project Director

Linda A. Roska
Catherine A. Christner

Departmental Reviewers
Richard Kallus
David-Keith Murphy
Karen Dvorak
Nancy Stevens

Vicky A. Killgore
Graphics, Layout, and Design

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Grade 3 Classrooms and Student Performance in Texas Public Schools

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Highlights

- Students who were judged *ready to begin* the third grade and displayed self-help skills were more likely to master the third-grade Essential Elements and perform well on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

- Almost all teachers used a variety of instructional practices in the course of a week, including one-to-one instruction, whole-class instruction, and grouping students for cooperative learning.

- Third-grade teachers were also using a variety of practices in teaching reading and writing, including using an assortment of books, reading aloud, having students read aloud, providing time to read without interruption, having students respond in writing, and demonstrating cursive writing.

- A higher percentage of third graders in classrooms where students with different skill levels were grouped together passed the TAAS tests and mastered more of the Essential Elements than did students in classrooms where this practice was not used.

- The majority of teachers had the materials necessary to teach effectively. Shortages most likely to occur were of multimedia materials, above- and below-grade-level materials, and Spanish-language materials.

- When adequate instructional materials were not available, student performance tended to be poorer.

- Students in classrooms with hands-on science and social studies activities tended to perform better.

- At least three-quarters of students were using computers weekly. Only a third of teachers were using computers weekly for instructional purposes.

- Longer teacher planning periods were associated with higher passing rates on the TAAS.

Grade 3 Classrooms and Student Performance in Texas Public Schools

Executive Summary

Systemwide Elementary Reform Project

The Systemwide Elementary Reform (SER) project is a series of studies begun with a group of first graders and their teachers in the 1995-96 school year. This component of the project profiles a sample of third-grade students and teachers in Texas at these same schools. In addition, it explores the relationships between student characteristics, teaching practices, and materials in Grade 3 classrooms and student performance in Grade 3. A companion report, *A Longitudinal Study of Primary School Classrooms and Grade 3 Performance in Texas Public Schools,* evaluates Grade 3 performance based on student behavior and classroom characteristics in Grades 1 and 3.

Student and Teacher Characteristics

The characteristics of the third graders in this study were similar to those of third graders statewide. Just over half (51%) of the students in the sample were female. White students represented 46 percent of the sample group; Hispanic students, 40 percent; and African American students, 13 percent. Asian American and Native American students combined accounted for fewer than 2 percent of the third graders studied.

Of the students in the sample group, 55 percent were identified as economically disadvantaged, 19 percent as having limited English proficiency, and 7 percent as gifted/talented. Sixty percent of the students received Title I services, and 13 percent participated in special education.

The average attendance rate for the sample group was very high, at 97 percent. On the English-language version of the Grade 3 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), 84 percent of the students passed the reading test, and 78 percent passed the mathematics test. Over 90 percent of the students were ultimately promoted to Grade 4, while just 2 percent were retained in Grade 3. Promotion status was not known for 7 percent of the students.

As with the students, Grade 3 teachers in this study had characteristics similar to those of third-grade teachers across the state. The vast majority (94%) of the teachers were female. White teachers comprised 73 percent of the group surveyed, while Hispanic (20%) and African American (7%) teachers represented just over one fourth of the sample. About one out of four teachers had twenty or more years of experience, while another 25 percent had four years or less.

Readiness to Begin and Student Behavior

Teachers reported that 69 percent of the students began the school year *ready* for the academic demands of third grade. By the end of the year, these third graders were much more likely than their classmates to pass the TAAS tests and be judged by their teachers as having achieved a high degree of mastery of the Essential Elements.

Nearly 80 percent of the third graders participated in class activities and interacted with classmates *most* or *all* of the time, according to their teachers. Two-thirds of the students demonstrated self-help skills *most* or *all* of the time, a behavior found to be associated with high TAAS performance and mastery of the Essential Elements.

Over the course of the year, almost a quarter of the Grade 3 students were referred outside the classroom for disciplinary action one or more times. Students who received disciplinary action were less likely than their third-grade peers to pass the TAAS or master *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements.

Academic Growth

Teachers in the study reported that the majority of students mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in seven subject areas. The majority of students with high perceived mastery passed the TAAS; conversely, the majority of students with low perceived mastery failed.

Forty-three percent of the third graders required extra instructional assistance, such as mentoring or tutoring, to help master the Grade 3 curriculum. On average, students who received extra assistance had lower TAAS scores and were reported to have mastered fewer of the Essential Elements than other third graders in the study. Students referred by their teachers for special education assessment (11%) or language assessment (10%) were more likely to demonstrate lower levels of performance, as well.

Teacher Work Environment

Teachers' attitudes toward their work environment were favorable. Most felt they had the support of the administration and had influence in site-based decision making. Although fewer than one in four teachers surveyed had an instructional assistant in the classroom, the majority (87%) felt the pupil:teacher ratio was adequate. Eighty-two percent of teachers had a planning period that met or exceeded the statutory requirement of 45 minutes (Texas Education Code [TEC] §21.404). Having a planning period of longer than 50 minutes was found to be associated with higher percentages of students passing the TAAS.

Over 90 percent of teachers in the study reported having frequent contact with the parents of their students through weekly communication and parent-teacher conferences. Students of teachers who communicated with parents on a weekly basis were more likely to pass the TAAS than were students of teachers who did not.

Instructional Practices

Generally, Grade 3 teachers reported using a variety of instructional practices in the classroom. At least once a week, over 90 percent of the teachers used one-to-one instruction, whole-class instruction, and/or grouping students for cooperating learning. Eighty-seven percent of the teachers surveyed grouped students based on diverse abilities, a practice found to be associated with higher student performance.

Fewer teachers reported using learning centers (67%), regrouping students in class after some students left for special program participation (52%), or grouping students for in-class team teaching (48%). Each of these practices was associated with lower student performance.

Instructional Materials and Technology

Eighty-seven percent of the third-grade teachers reported having sufficient quantities of instructional materials overall, and over 90 percent felt the materials were culturally and/or developmentally appropriate. Having adequate amounts of appropriate materials was related to higher numbers of students passing the TAAS and mastering the Essential Elements. On the other hand, students of teachers who felt they lacked specific types of classroom materials, such as multimedia and below-grade-level materials, tended to show lower performance.

Teachers reported several ways in which their students used computers. Students in third-grade classrooms most often used computers for drill and practice, accelerated reading, and free-time activities. In addition, most students used computers at least once a week for language arts and mathematics, while only a small percentage used computers weekly for science or social studies.

Students of teachers who reported using the computer for non-instructional activities (such as maintaining grades, e-mail, or preparing materials outside of class) or for an accelerated reading program were more likely to pass the TAAS than were students of teachers who did not use computers for these purposes.

Conclusions

It is important to note that student characteristics, teaching practices, or instructional materials cannot be isolated and linked directly to student achievement. Learning occurs in a complex environment where multiple factors determine different levels of student achievement.

Grade 3 teachers appear to be using instructional methods that are well-founded in the research, adapting new approaches when circumstances in the classroom warrant. What remains unclear is the strategies that should be taken to improve the educational opportunities for the minority of students who are still slipping through the net. Findings from this study suggest that the practice of grouping students with diverse skill levels may hold promise for reaching lower-performing students.

Recently, reforms aimed at raising academic standards have focused renewed attention on policies related to retaining students in grade. Senate Bill 4, passed by the Texas Legislature in 1999, phases in new standards for student promotion at Grades 3, 5, and 8. Students who do not pass the TAAS at these grades levels must be enrolled in accelerated instruction programs and given additional opportunities to pass the test. Students who do not pass the test on the third try may be retained. Had all the third graders in this study who failed the TAAS reading test been retained, approximately 921 students (16%) would not have been promoted to Grade 4. Data from the study indicate that only 2 percent of the students were ultimately retained in third grade. It is not known what kinds of special instructional programs are currently available for students who fail the TAAS reading test in Grade 3.

INTRODUCTION

"The primary grades hold the potential for starting children on a course of lifelong learning" (Bredekamp, 1987). From a developmental perspective, early childhood, ages three through eight, is qualitatively different from later school years and adulthood. Children display different learning styles and progress at quite different rates. Instructional practices and methods of assessing student performance suitable for young children differ from those for their older counterparts. This means, in turn, that methods for evaluating the performance of primary education differ from those for evaluating higher grades.

In 1995, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) initiated the Statewide Texas Educational Progress Study (STEPS) for monitoring statewide, educational progress over time. STEPS emphasizes grade levels with the most comparable student performance data, namely, Grades 4-12. Recognizing the importance and distinctive characteristics of primary education, the Systemwide Elementary Reform (SER) project was implemented to supplement STEPS by covering the primary grades. The SER project aims to enhance understanding of public education in Texas by establishing demographic, program participation, and performance trends; monitoring the effects of policy changes on those trends; and modeling the relationships between context, processes, and results.

The SER series (see box on page 6) includes studies begun with a group of first graders and their teachers in the 1995-96 school year. This report profiles a sample of third-grade students and teachers at these same schools in 1997-98. The focus is on student characteristics, instructional practices, and student performance in third grade. A companion report focuses on instructional practices and materials in first- and third-grade classrooms, and student performance at the end of third grade.

How were these students doing? Were they *ready to begin* third grade? How well were their classrooms equipped? Did they work in small groups, large groups, and one-to-one with the teacher? Had they mastered third-grade reading and mathematics skills by the end of the year? These and other questions are addressed in these two companion reports.

Reports in the SER Series

First Steps in School: An Examination of Grade 1 in Texas Public Schools – Summary Report, Report No. 4, August 1997

First Steps in School: An Examination of Grade 1 in Texas Public Schools – Technical Report, Report No. 4A, August 1997

Systemwide Elementary Reform (SER) Grade 2 Interim Report, Report No. 5, August 1997

Grade 3 Classrooms and Student Performance in Texas Public Schools, Report No. 6A, December 1999

A Longitudinal Study of Primary School Classrooms and Grade 3 Performance in Texas Public Schools, Report No. 6B, December 1999

Other Reports in the STEPS Series

The Development of Accountability Systems Nationwide and in Texas, Report No. 1, April 1996

Case Studies of Successful Campuses: Responses to a High-Stakes State Accountability System, Report No. 2, May 1996

A Study of Student Mobility in Texas Public Schools, Report No. 3, March 1997

LITERATURE AND POLICY REVIEW

Early Childhood Development

Child development experts view growth and development between the ages of three and eight years of age as a continuum (Bredekamp, 1987). The sequence of developmental stages during this period is uniform, but the pace of development is highly variable. A group of children of the same age will likely be in different stages of development.

Students who start the primary grades ready to learn are much more likely to be successful in school. General readiness includes social and emotional maturity; the ability to communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally in one's primary language; enthusiasm about new activities; the ability to help oneself; and a positive attitude towards learning (TEA, 1997).

Instructional Practices

Instructional practices and assessment in primary school must take into account the uneven preparedness, differential rates of development, and distinctive learning styles of children between the ages of three and eight. Although specific instructional practices depend on the learning style and developmental stage of the child, some general principles of instructional practice have been proposed for this age group.

Part of developmentally-appropriate instruction includes providing instruction to students in ways that match their learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1992). Visual learners may respond best to free reading or silent reading; auditory learners may respond best to songs or oral reading; and tactile, or kinesthetic, learners may respond best to writing or puppetry (McIllwain, 1994).

Interactive learning is important because problem-solving is the foundation of a young child's learning (Britz & Richard, 1992). Piaget (1937/1952) stated that children understand only what they discover or invent themselves. Squire (1999) summarized data from a number of research studies that indicated that students engaged in interactive learning processes in language arts had better achievement than students receiving passive instruction.

Cooperative learning is the grouping of students with diverse abilities to work together toward a common goal. It has been shown to be an effective instructional practice for primary-age children. Madden, Stevens, and Slavin (1986) and Slavin (1987) reported that cooperative learning contributed positively to student achievement.

Another instructional method that has been shown to be effective, especially for low-achieving students, is heterogeneous grouping, or grouping students with different levels of ability (Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander, & Stluka, 1994). Grouws and Ceballa (1999) summarized a series of research studies with consistent findings: when small groups of students worked on mathematics activities, problems, and assignments, their mathematics achievement scores increased.

Research results on the effectiveness of homework are mixed. Cawelti (1999) summarized the positive results of the assignment and completion of homework on students' academic achievement. The research indicated that the positive effect was greatly increased when homework was graded, commented on, and discussed by teachers. Cooper (1989) found that numerous factors influenced the effectiveness of homework, one of them being grade level. For elementary students, it appeared that no amount of homework affected achievement.

Pressley and Rankin (1994) observed instruction in the classes of several hundred teachers whose students consistently outperformed others in reading achievement. No matter what the individual teachers called their methods, they consistently used a balanced approach that incorporated direct and organized skill instruction into a broader, language-rich and literature-comprehensive language arts program.

Providing a wide variety of literature for students to read greatly enhances children's reading (Sobol & Sobol, 1987). Squire (1999) summarized a number of research studies that indicated that extensive reading of a wide variety of materials, both in school and outside of school, resulted in substantial growth in the vocabulary, comprehension abilities, and information base of students.

Materials and Computer Technology

Sobol and Sobol (1987) emphasized that learning in primary-age children develops from the concrete to the representational to the abstract. Long-term use of concrete materials (or manipulatives), such as blocks or marbles, was positively related to increases in student mathematics achievement and improved student attitudes towards mathematics (Grouws & Ceballa, 1999).

Although students should learn number facts, they must spend time developing the ability to solve problems through the use of mathematics (Sobol & Sobol, 1987). The use of calculators and computers is encouraged so that more time can be devoted to problem-solving, estimation, and checking and interpretation of results, rather than drill and practice.

Evaluating the Performance of Primary School Students

Assessment techniques should meet the same standards for developmental appropriateness as curricula. The Southern Regional Education Board recommended that, in

kindergarten through Grade 3, each child's assessment be based on prior performance and the development of critical skills (1994, p. 15).

Standardized, norm-referenced tests and numeric or letter grades are familiar assessment instruments. In the early primary grades, these instruments may be complemented or supplanted by performance inventories, portfolios, or narrative progress reports (TEA, 1997). The use of multiple techniques can be valuable for assessing primary-age children.

State Policy Related to Student Promotion

Policies related to student promotion have changed in recent years. Prior to 1995, a number of rules addressed grade-level promotion in public education. For example, the Texas Education Code §21.721 (TEC, 1994) stated that districts could not grant social promotions. In 1995, the Texas Legislature removed the prohibition on social promotion and introduced language requiring demonstrated proficiency. The 1996 TEC §28.021(a) stated, "A student may be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency of the subject matter of the course or grade level." State Board of Education rules that specified which students should or should not be promoted were eliminated in light of the changed statue.

Senate Bill 4, passed by the Texas Legislature in 1999, phases in new standards for student promotion at Grades 3, 5, and 8. Students at these grade levels will have three opportunities to take and pass the TAAS. Students who do not pass the TAAS at these grades may be retained. The legislation requires school districts to enroll students who fail the TAAS at these grade levels in a program of accelerated instruction.

STUDY APPROACH

The SER studies were designed to provide information on the classroom experiences and educational progress of students in primary school in Texas, taking into account the variability in *readiness to begin* school and in classroom behaviors. The framework and much of the information used in these studies were provided by the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). Supplementary information was gathered on instructional practices, student performance, and related topics. In this report, the focus is on components most directly under the influence of the classroom teacher, namely, instructional practices and materials, the use of technology, and student behavior.

Four questions guided the structure for this report:

1) What does third grade look like in Texas?

2) How do third-grade teachers view students' *readiness to begin* Grade 3, classroom behavior, and academic growth?

3) What teaching practices, methodologies, and technology do third-grade teachers report using in the classroom?

4) How is TAAS performance and perceived mastery of the Essential Elements related to other factors investigated in the study?

METHODS

Sampling

This study is a follow-up to work that began during the 1995-96 school year with an investigation of first-grade classrooms in Texas. To produce a sample of Grade 1 students who resembled all Grade 1 students in the state demographically, 85 campuses were drawn randomly from four district types (*non-metro, rural, suburban,* and *urban*) and two campus accountability ratings (*Acceptable* and *Recognized*). Refer to the Glossary on page 37 for definitions of district types and campus accountability ratings.

Five campuses with *Exemplary* accountability ratings, five campuses with *Low-performing* accountability ratings, and five campuses on a year-round calendar were added. Prior to the distribution of the survey, one campus declined to participate, bringing the number of campuses to 99. For more information on the sampling techniques used in the Grade 1 study, please see *First Steps in School: An Examination of Grade 1 in Texas Public Schools – Technical Report* (TEA, 1997).

Grade 3 surveys for the 1997-98 school year were sent to the same campuses selected for the Grade 1 sample, except for one school that no longer existed. Of the 98 schools that received surveys, six schools did not complete or did not return them. Grade 3 surveys were received for 7,216 students and 415 teachers. Of the surveys returned, 527 lacked some or all information due to a lack of parental consent.

Sources of Data

PEIMS and TAAS

The PEIMS maintained by TEA includes data on student demographics, campus and district personnel, finances, and organization. All public school districts are required to submit PEIMS data to TEA annually (TEC §42.006). In addition, contractors provide annual data to TEA on the TAAS and other standardized tests. These sources of data form the foundation of the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), which provides comprehensive profiles of the institutional characteristics and performance of Texas public schools districts and campuses.

The TAAS is a standardized, criterion-referenced test administered to public school students statewide beginning in the third grade (TEC §39.023). It is designed to measure problem-solving and critical thinking skills required in the Essential Elements of the state-mandated curriculum (formerly Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code). In the spring of 1998, the TAAS for third graders was based on the Essential Elements in reading and mathematics.[1]

[1] In 1997, the State Board of Education approved the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to replace the Essential Elements beginning in the 1998-99 school year (TAC Chapters 110-128). After alignment with the TEKS, the 1999-2000 TAAS will be based on the TEKS objectives.

The Texas Learning Index (TLI) was developed to assess student progress across grades and subjects on the TAAS reading and mathematics tests. A TLI score of 70 corresponds to the passing standard at each grade level.

Supplemental Surveys

Each participating Grade 3 teacher completed two surveys. One survey asked for information about staffing, organization, instructional practices and materials, and use of computer technology. The second survey was completed for each third-grade student and focused on enrollment information, academic progress, contact with parents, classroom behaviors, and discipline. Of particular interest in this study were teacher assessments of student *readiness to begin* the grade level, student mastery of the Essential Elements in the core subject areas, and student behaviors.

Methods of Analysis

Most of the data from the surveys were summarized by the responses to each survey question. After summarizing, statistical tests (i.e., correlation and chi square) were used to look for any relationships between the survey variables and either TAAS performance or perceived mastery of the Essential Elements.

RESULTS

What Does Third Grade Look Like in Texas?

Compared to Grade 3 students statewide, students in the study sample were demographically similar (Table 1). The average attendance rate of 97 percent matched the average rate for Grade 3 students statewide. Attendance rates for the group did not differ significantly by gender, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status.

Table 1. Grade 3 Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Sample 7,216 Students	State 300,021 Students
Gender		
Female	49%	49%
Male	51%	51%
Ethnicity		
White	46%	44%
Hispanic	40%	38%
African American	13%	15%
Asian American	1%	2%
Native American	Less than 1%	Less than 1%
Economically disadvantaged	55%	55%
Served by Title I	60%	62%
Limited English proficient	19%	18%
Served by special education	13%	12%
Identified as gifted/talented	7%	7%
Average mathematics TAAS TLI score	77	78
Average reading TAAS TLI score	81	82

Table 2 shows that many of the students in the sample received special services of one kind or another (students may have received more than one kind of service). For example, 463 students were identified as gifted/talented. Of these, 50 percent were boys, 71 percent were White, and 22 percent were economically disadvantaged.

Of the approximately 6,500 students who had English-language TAAS results, about 90 percent had valid scores. Few students received special exemptions or were absent

Table 2. Characteristics of Students Receiving Program Services

	Number	Male	White	Hispanic	African American	Economically Disadvantaged	LEP
Special Education	**910**	**66%**	**49%**	**35%**	**15%**	**63%**	**14%**
Bilingual	909	49%	<1%	100%	0%	96%	100%
ESL	**245**	**59%**	**4%**	**86%**	**<1%**	**90%**	**100%**
Gifted/Talented	463	50%	71%	17%	9%	22%	4%

on the days of test administration. Table 3 shows the TAAS scores for third graders in the study broken down by student group. On average, White students had higher test scores than students of other ethnicities, and non-economically disadvantaged students had higher scores than students identified as economically disadvantaged.

Table 3. Texas Learning Index (TLI) Scores, Overall and by Student Group

	Reading	Mathematics
Overall	81	77
Females	82	77
Males	81	78
African American	78	72
Hispanic	78	74
White	84	81
Not economically disadvantaged	85	81
Economically disadvantaged	78	74

Note. A TLI of 70 or above is considered passing.

Of the almost 550 students who took the Spanish-language TAAS tests, nearly 500 had valid scores. Sixty-one percent passed the reading test, and 60 percent passed the mathematics test. Most of the students who took the Spanish-language TAAS tests were Hispanic.

As with the students, teachers in the sample were similar to Grade 3 teachers across the state (Table A1 on page 27). Most of the teachers were female (94%), and nearly three out of four were White. Hispanic (20%) and African American (7%) teachers represented just over one fourth of the group surveyed. About one in four teachers had 20 or more years of experience, while another 25 percent had four or fewer.

How Do Third-Grade Teachers View Children's *Readiness to Begin* Grade 3, Classroom Behavior, and Academic Growth?

Readiness

The majority of students, 69 percent, were perceived by their teachers as beginning the school year *ready* for the academic demands of third grade. A higher percentage of girls (73%) than boys (66%) were perceived to be *ready* for Grade 3, and a higher percentage of Asian American students (83%) were perceived to be *ready* than were students of any other ethnic group. Students who were limited English proficient (LEP), economically disadvantaged, at risk, or receiving Title I services were less likely to be perceived as *ready* than were other students.

Readiness to begin Grade 3 was strongly related to passing the TAAS reading and mathematics tests and mastering the Essential Elements in language arts, mathemat-

ics, science, and social studies (Table A2 on page 27). Compared to their classmates, a greater percentage of students who were perceived by their teachers as *ready* to begin Grade 3 passed the TAAS tests and were judged to have mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements.

Classroom Behaviors

According to teachers, the majority of students exhibited appropriate classroom behaviors *most* or *all* of the time and rarely, if at all, exhibited less desirable behaviors. Most teachers (82%) reported that more than 75 percent of their students participated in all class activities throughout the day. A majority of teachers (57%) also reported that 5 percent or fewer of their students were routinely off task during the day or were routinely disruptive during the day.

Approximately two-thirds of the students demonstrated self-help skills in learning *most* or *all* of the time. Demonstrating self-help skills was moderately related to high performance on the TAAS reading and mathematics tests and mastering *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The majority of students in the sample were not referred outside the classroom for disciplinary action or suspended from school during their third-grade year. However, 37 percent of African American students, 20 percent of Hispanic children, and 19 percent of White children were disciplined one or more times. In addition, 5 percent of the students from the sample were placed in an alternative learning setting for disciplinary reasons. The majority of these students (87%) were placed in an in-school suspension center. Students placed in an alternative setting were more likely placed there for either 1-10 days (67%) or less than one day (28%).

Students who were referred outside the classroom for disciplinary action, suspended, or referred to an alternative learning center for disciplinary reasons were less likely to pass the TAAS tests or master *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements than students who were not disciplined. Table 4 shows passing rates on the TAAS reading test and level of mastery of the Essential Elements in language arts for disciplined and non-disciplined students.

Table 4. Performance of Disciplined and Non-Disciplined Students

		Passed Reading TAAS	Mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in Language Arts
Referred outside the classroom for disciplinary action	Yes	63%	60%
	No	79%	76%
Suspended from school	Yes	48%	48%
	No	77%	73%
Referred to an alternative learning center	Yes	58%	56%
	No	77%	73%

Academic Growth

Teachers reported their perceptions of student mastery of the Essential Elements in seven subject areas. Fewer students mastered the Essential Elements in the core subject areas — language arts (73%), mathematics (77%), science (80%), social studies (80%) — than in fine arts (85%), health (85%), and physical education (89%). A larger percentage of White students than Hispanic or African American students mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in the seven subject areas. Additionally, non-economically disadvantaged students mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements at a higher average rate than did students identified as economically disadvantaged.

The majority of students with high perceived mastery passed the TAAS; conversely, the majority of students with low perceived mastery failed. It is interesting to note that more students were judged to have a high level of mastery of the Essential Elements in mathematics than in language arts, yet the average TAAS score was lower for mathematics than reading.

Fewer than half of the students (43%) were reported to have received extra instructional assistance in mastering the Grade 3 curriculum. The types of assistance students received included: tutoring (2,128 students), mentoring (470), and enrollment in an optional extended year program in the summer prior to third grade (188). Another 693 students received an unspecified form of instructional assistance. Students who received extra assistance were less likely than other Grade 3 students to pass the TAAS tests or master the Essential Elements in the core subject areas.

Table 5. Recommended Promotion by Student Group

	Promote to Grade 4*	Place in Grade 4*	Retain in Grade 3*
All students	82%	12%	5%
Female	85%	9%	4%
Male	79%	14%	5%
African American	76%	13%	9%
Hispanic	75%	17%	7%
White	90%	8%	2%
Economically disadvantaged	73%	17%	7%
Not economically disadvantaged	92%	6%	2%
Average Reading TLI	84	66	61
Average Mathematics TLI	80	64	55
Mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in:			
Language Arts	86%	17%	4%
Mathematics	89%	25%	9%

* Teachers had the option of responding "Other" to this question. This option may have been more appropriate, for example, if the teacher felt the student should be promoted from a transitional program to regular Grade 3, should be placed in a transitional program, or should be re-evaluated following completion of a summer program. In addition, the teacher may not have been able to make a judgment at the time about the student's promotion/retention status.

During the school year, a small proportion of students were referred for special education assessment (11%) or language assessment (10%). Students referred for special education or language assessment were much more likely than other students to fail the TAAS reading and mathematics tests and much less likely to master *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in the core subject areas.

Asked to assess the grade-level promotion status of their students, teachers recommended promotion to Grade 4 for the majority of the third graders (82%) and retention in Grade 3 for only 5 percent of the students. Table 5 shows that the frequencies of specific recommendations varied by student group. Students recommended for promotion were much more likely to pass the TAAS reading and mathematics tests and to master *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in the four core subject areas, as compared to students recommended for placement in Grade 4 or retention in Grade 3.

The actual promotion/retention status of each student in the sample was determined using 1998-99 PEIMS data. The percentage of students who ultimately were promoted to fourth grade was greater than the percentage recommended by their teachers for promotion (Table 6). Students who were retained in grade were much less likely than other students to pass the TAAS or master *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in the four core subject areas.

Table 6. Actual Promotion Status (Based on PEIMS)

	Promoted to Grade 4	Retained in Grade 3
All students in the sample*	91%	2%
Female	91%	2%
Male	91%	2%
African American	86%	3%
Hispanic	91%	3%
White	93%	1%
Economically disadvantaged	90%	3%
Not economically disadvantaged	93%	1%
Average Reading TLI	82	59
Average Mathematics TLI	78	54
Mastered *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in:		
Language Arts	74%	13%
Mathematics	78%	54%
Teachers' judgment for promotion to Grade 4	95%	Less than 1%
Teachers' judgment for placement in Grade 4	91%	1%
Teachers' judgment for retention in Grade 3	66%	27%

* Unable to determine promotion status for 7 percent of students due to unreliable data, or no longer in PEIMS.

What Teaching Practices, Materials, and Technology Did Third-Grade Teachers Report Using in the Classroom?

Teacher Work Environment

The majority (55%) of teachers taught core subjects, such as reading, mathematics, and science, to the students in their classes. Although three out of four teachers did not have an instructional assistant in the classroom, most (87%) felt that the actual pupil:teacher ratio was adequate. Sixty percent of the instructional assistants were bilingual in English/Spanish.

The majority of teachers (92%) reported that administrators were *moderately* or *extremely* supportive of third-grade teachers. Fewer than 8 percent reported that administrators were *slightly* or *not at all* supportive. Seventy-five percent of teachers also perceived they had *moderate* or *extensive* influence in site-based decision making on campus. The remainder perceived having *limited* or *no influence* in site-based decision making. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the teachers believed that the school's counseling and guidance support services were adequate to the meet the needs of their students.

Most teachers (59%) had a planning period of 45-50 minutes, and over 90 percent said they shared the period with other teachers at their grade level. Students of teachers with planning periods lasting longer than 50 minutes had higher average passing rates on the TAAS tests than students of teachers with shorter planning periods.

Teachers in the sample reported a great deal of contact with the parents of their students. Ninety-one percent reported communicating with parents at least once a week. In addition, teachers held conferences with the parents of 92 percent of their students over the course of the school year. On average, parents of African American children had the highest parent-teacher conference attendance rate (94%), followed by parents of White children (92%) and parents of Hispanic children (91%). Students of teachers who had weekly communication with parents were more likely to pass the TAAS tests than were students of teachers who communicated with parents less frequently.

Teaching Practices

Three out of four teachers reported using different teaching modalities to match the different learning styles of students on a daily basis. Most teachers used similar methods in the classroom, such as one-to-one instruction (99%), whole-class instruction (97%), grouping students to facilitate cooperative learning (93%), and grouping students who have diverse skill levels (87%). Fewer teachers reported using learning centers (67%), regrouping students who remain in class after some students leave for special program participation (52%), and grouping for in-class team teaching (48%).

For reading and writing, over 90 percent of teachers in the study reported using a variety of practices at least once a week. These included using an assortment of books, reading aloud to students, having students read aloud, providing time to read without interruption, having students respond in writing, and demonstrating cursive writing. The majority of teachers also used the basal reading series (75%) and a supplemental reading series (60%).

Most teachers reported assigning mathematics homework on a daily basis, language arts homework on a weekly basis, and science and social studies homework on a monthly basis or less. In addition, 69 percent of the teachers reported that students were pulled out once or twice a day for special programs such as Title I or special education.

One teaching practice in particular stood out as having a positive relationship with student performance. A higher percentage of third graders in classrooms where students with different skill levels were grouped together passed the TAAS tests and mastered more of the Essential Elements than did students in classrooms where this practice was not used.

In contrast, students of teachers who used learning centers were less likely to pass the TAAS than were students of teachers who did not use this teaching method. Similarly, a higher percentage of students in classrooms where teachers grouped for in-class team teaching mastered fewer of the mathematics Essential Elements than did students in classrooms where teachers did not use this practice. Finally, the average rate of failure on the TAAS mathematics test was higher for students in classrooms where teachers regrouped students after some left the classroom than it was for students in other classrooms.

Teaching Materials

A majority of teachers (87%) reported adequate quantities of the materials necessary to teach effectively. Most teachers also reported that the materials, overall, were culturally and developmentally appropriate for their students (94% and 95%, respectively). Finally, 84 percent of the Grade 3 teachers felt that the instructional materials provided *very good* or *excellent* coverage of the Essential Elements.

Almost half of the teachers reported lacking multimedia materials, while about one-third reported lacking above- and below-grade-level materials. Approximately 25 percent of teachers reported lacking Spanish-language materials.

The use of manipulatives varied widely by subject area. The majority of teachers reported using manipulatives for science (81%) and mathematics (89%). Fewer teachers reported using manipulatives for language arts (52%) and social studies (49%).

In classrooms where, overall, the teaching materials were considered culturally and developmentally appropriate, students were more likely to pass the TAAS tests and master more of the Essential Elements in the core subject areas than were students in classrooms lacking these types of materials. Students were less likely to pass the TAAS tests in classrooms that lacked multiculturally appropriate materials, multimedia, or below-grade-level materials than were students in classrooms where these materials were found.

Using manipulatives for science seemed to make a difference for student learning. A larger percentage of students in classrooms where science manipulatives were used passed the TAAS mathematics test and mastered more of the Essential Elements than did students in classrooms where they were not used. Likewise, students in classrooms where social studies manipulatives were used mastered *more* of the social studies Essential Elements, on average, than did those in classrooms where manipulatives were not used for this subject.

Computer Technology

Teachers reported that the majority of students used computers at least once a week in language arts and mathematics classes (80% and 75%, respectively). However, few students used computers in science or social studies classes on a weekly basis (12% and 13%, respectively).

Most teachers reported that students used computers once a week for drill and practice (80%), accelerated reading (76%), and solving mathematics problems (66%). Fewer teachers reported that students used computers for writing paragraphs and stories (34%), searching for information (29%), solving scientific problems (12%), or e-mail correspondence (4%).

Some teachers (33%) reported using computers for instructional purposes on a weekly basis. The majority (73%), however, reported using computers for non-instructional purposes (e.g., maintaining grades, e-mail, preparing materials outside of class time) at least once a week.

Students of teachers who used the computer for non-instructional activities or for an accelerated reading program were more likely to pass the TAAS than were students of teachers who did not use computers for these purposes. Interestingly, students of teachers who did not use computers in the classroom for mathematics and science problems passed the TAAS at a higher average rate than did students of teachers who did use the computer for such activities.

CONCLUSION

The findings reported in this component of the SER study are based on survey responses received for 7,216 Grade 3 students and 415 Grade 3 teachers.

Higher TAAS performance and greater mastery of the Essential Elements were related to *readiness to begin* Grade 3, frequent use of self-help skills, and promotion to Grade 4. Lower TAAS performance and less mastery of the Essential Elements were related to receiving instructional assistance in mastering the Grade 3 curriculum, having been disciplined or suspended, and retention in Grade 3.

The following practices were related to higher student achievement: grouping students with diverse skill levels, using manipulatives for science or social studies, and using computers for accelerated reading. The following practices were related to lower achievement: using learning centers, grouping students for in-class team teaching, and regrouping students after some leave the classroom for special programs. In addition, lacking particular types of materials (multicultural, multimedia, and below-grade-level) was related to lower student performance.

Eighty-seven percent of the teachers surveyed grouped students with diverse skill levels, a practice found to be associated with higher student performance. This is consistent with previous research that showed heterogeneous grouping to be an effective instructional practice, especially for low-ability students. The finding that students of teachers who did *not* use learning centers passed the TAAS at a higher average rate than students of teachers who *did* use this method should be viewed with caution. Learning centers are often used with students who may be at an earlier stage of childhood development.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Grade 3 Teacher Characteristics

Characteristic	Sample 415 teachers	State 17,764 teachers
Gender		
Female	94%	93%
Male	6%	7%
Ethnicity		
White	73%	44%
Hispanic	20%	38%
African American	7%	15%
Asian American	0%	2%
Native American	0%	Less than 1%
Years of teaching experience		
4 years or less	25%	28%
5-9 years	17%	21%
10-14 years	17%	16%
15-19 years	16%	14%
20 or more years	24%	21%

Table A2. Performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and Teacher Assessments of *Readiness* and Mastery of the Essential Elements

		Passing TAAS in:		Mastering *most* or *all* of the Essential Elements in:			
Student began school year *ready* for Grade 3?		Mathematics	Reading	Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Yes	69%	87%	90%	92%	94%	95%	95%
No	31%	37%	42%	30%	38%	47%	47%

Appendix B
Third-Grade Teacher Questionnaire
Percentage (Number) Responding

Staffing and Organizational Information

1. Are students in your class taught core subjects, such as science, mathematics, or reading, by teachers other than yourself?

Yes	No
45% (182)	55% (221)

2a. Do you have an instructional assistant in your classroom?

Yes	No
22% (88)	78% (316)

2b. If you answered "YES", is the assistant bilingual in English/Spanish?

Yes	No
60% (53)	39% (34)

3. Is the actual working pupil:teacher ratio at third grade adequate?

Yes	No
87% (350)	13% (51)

4. Are the school's counseling and guidance support services adequate to meet the needs of your students?

Yes	No
63% (252)	37% (148)

5. Is your planning period shared with other teachers on your grade level?

Yes	No
91% (363)	9% (36)

6. About how long is your daily planning period?

Up to 44 minutes	18% (72)
45 - 50 minutes	59% (240)
51 - 55 minutes	4% (15)
56 - 60 minutes	15% (62)
More than 60 minutes	4% (14)

7. In your opinion, how much influence do teachers on your campus have in site-based decision-making (SBDM)?

Extensive	25% (100)
Moderate	50% (201)
Limited	22% (89)
No Influence	3% (13)

8. How supportive are the school's administrators of third-grade teachers?

Extremely	56% (226)
Moderately	36% (146)
Slightly	7% (28)
Not at All	1% (3)

Students and Instructional Information

9. At least once a week, do you . . .

Initiate communication (mail, handouts, telephone, etc.) with parents/guardians of students in your classroom for <u>any reason</u>, not just in relation to disciplinary incidents?

Yes	No
91% (369)	8% (34)

Use whole-class instruction?

Yes	No
97% (393)	3% (10)

Use one-to-one instruction with students?

Yes	No
99% (397)	1% (5)

Use learning centers (in-class designated areas for individuals or groups to engage in a class-related activity)?

Yes	No
67% (269)	33% (133)

Group students on the basis of having **similar** abilities/ skill levels?

Yes	No
72% (292)	28% (112)

Group students on the basis of having **diverse** abilities/ skill levels?

Yes	No
87% (352)	13% (51)

Group students to facilitate cooperative learning?

Yes	No
93% (374)	7% (29)

Group students for in-class team teaching (Special Education, Title I, etc.)?

Yes	No
48% (193)	52% (208)

(continued) **At least once a week, do you . . .**

Regroup students remaining in class after some students leave for special program participation (Special Education, Title I, etc.)?

Yes	No
52% (205)	48% (191)

Use the state-adopted basal reading series?

Yes	No
75% (302)	25% (99)

Use the state-adopted supplemental reading series?

Yes	No
60% (241)	39% (157)

Use an assortment of children's books?

Yes	No
98% (394)	3% (10)

Read aloud to the students?

Yes	No
99% (400)	1% (5)

Have students read aloud?

Yes	No
98% (395)	2% (9)

Provide time for the students to read without interruption?

Yes	No
98% (397)	2% (8)

Have students read the same story more than once?

Yes	No
86% (344)	14% (56)

Have students respond in writing to the stories they read?

Yes	No
91% (365)	9% (38)

Demonstrate cursive handwriting for the students?

Yes	No
95% (383)	5% (21)

Provide time for the students to practice cursive handwriting?

Yes	No
95% (380)	6% (22)

Demonstrate the process of composing sentences and paragraphs for the students?

Yes	No
92% (372)	7% (30)

Provide time for the students to compose sentences and paragraphs?

Yes	No
96% (388)	4% (16)

10. On average, how frequently do you do the following in your classroom?

Use enrichment activities with any or all students in your class.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less
33%	53%	10%	4%
(132)	(209)	(39)	(15)

Use different teaching modalities to match the different learning styles of students in your class.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less
74%	21%	2%	3%
(298)	(84)	(7)	(11)

Assign mathematics homework to your students.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less	Do not teach this subject
50%	27%	6%	4%	11%
(203)	(109)	(25)	(14)	(45)

Assign language arts homework to your students.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less	Do not teach this subject
34%	42%	9%	7%	7%
(135)	(167)	(36)	(26)	(29)

Assign science homework to your students.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less	Do not teach this subject
2%	25%	21%	38%	15%
(6)	(100)	(83)	(153)	(59)

Assign social studies homework to your students.

Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly or less	Do not teach this subject
2%	28%	22%	37%	12%
(6)	(111)	(88)	(148)	(49)

11. Approximately what percentage of students in your class this year . . .

a. participate in all class activities throughout the day?

25% or less	2% (6)
26% to 50%	3% (11)
51% to 75%	14% (57)
More than 75%	82% (327)

b. are routinely off task (but not disruptive) during the day?

None	5% (18)
5% or less	57% (229)
6% to 10%	9% (75)
11% to 25%	12% (47)
More than 25%	7% (26)

c. are routinely disruptive during the day?

None	14% (57)
5% or less	57% (230)
6% to 10%	16% (63)
11% to 25%	9% (34)
More than 25%	4% (15)

12. On a typical day, how often are students pulled out of your class for special programs such as Title I or Special Education, etc.?

Never	14% (55)
Once	34% (137)
Twice	35% (138)
Three or more times	16% (63)

Instructional Materials

13. Regarding the instructional materials that you use in your class:

Are there sufficient quantities for the students?

Yes	No
87% (351)	13% (54)

Are they culturally appropriate for the students?

Yes	No
94% (377)	7% (26)

Are they developmentally appropriate for the students?

Yes	No
95% (383)	5% (21)

What type of materials, if any, do you **lack** to work effectively with your students:

Spanish language?

Yes	No
22% (77)	77% (267)

Other language?

Yes	No
12% (40)	88% (295)

More up-to-date?

Yes	No
27% (95)	73% (256)

Multicultural?

Yes	No
28% (101)	71% (254)

Multimedia?

Yes	No
43% (149)	57% (200)

Above grade level?

Yes	No
31% (108)	69% (241)

Below grade level?

Yes	No
35% (125)	65% (234)

For which subjects do you generally provide your students with manipulatives or "hands-on" materials for learning?

Language arts?		Do Not Teach This
Yes	No	Subject
52% (200)	41% (158)	7% (28)

Science?		Do Not Teach This
Yes	No	Subject
81% (320)	5% (18)	15% (58)

Social Studies?		Do Not Teach This
Yes	No	Subject
49% (193)	37% (145)	14% (53)

Mathematics?		Do Not Teach This
Yes	No	Subject
89% (357)	1% (1)	11% (42)

14. How adequately are the essential elements addressed by the instructional materials you use with this grade level?

Excellent coverage	30% (118)
Very good coverage	54% (210)
Reasonable coverage	14% (56)
Marginal coverage	2% (6)

Technology

15. Does your campus have adequate technology to effectively design and implement classroom instruction?

Yes	No
62% (246)	38% (152)

16. At least once a week, do you . . .

use a computer to support non-instructional professional work, such as maintaining grades, E-mail, or preparing materials outside of class time?

Yes	No
73% (290)	28% (110)

use a computer during instructional delivery?

Yes	No
33% (119)	67% (241)

17. At least once a week, do your students use school computers . . .

for drill and practice?

Yes	No	Unsure
80% (323)	17% (70)	2% (9)

to write paragraphs and stories?

Yes	No	Unsure
34% (135)	60% (243)	6% (24)

for accelerated reading?

Yes	No	Unsure
76% (305)	22% (88)	3% (10)

for solving mathematics problems?

Yes	No	Unsure
66% (264)	29% (115)	5% (20)

for solving scientific problems?

Yes	No	Unsure
12% (46)	77% (308)	11% (44)

to search for information?

Yes	No	Unsure
29% (116)	64% (257)	7% (28)

for free time activities (e.g., games)?

Yes	No	Unsure
67% (271)	29% (116)	4% (14)

for E-mail correspondence?

Yes	No	Unsure
4% (15)	93% (371)	4% (14)

as part of integrated learning systems (e.g., Jostens, CCC)?

Yes	No	Unsure
43% (170)	47% (186)	11% (42)

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

STEPS Project
Division of Research and Evaluation
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
512/463-9701

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Appendix C
Questionnaire About Individual Students
Percentage (Number) of Students For Whom Teachers Completed Questionnaires

Did this student's parent or guardian consent to participation in this survey?

Yes	No
69% (2,102)	31% (945)

If you answered "NO", please STOP here and return this student questionnaire with the other questionnaires. If consent was required and obtained, please continue.

Has this student been in your class at all this school year?

Yes	No
98% (6,037)	2% (136)

If you answered "NO", please STOP here and return this student questionnaire with the other questionnaires.

Is this student still in your class this school year?

Yes	No
95% (5,782)	5% (285)

If this student was in your class for five months or longer, please complete this questionnaire. If this student was in your class for less than five months, please STOP here and return this questionnaire with the other questionnaires.

Academic Progress

1. Did this student begin the school year ready for the academic demands of this grade?

Yes	No
69% (4,044)	31% (1,796)

2. Did this student receive any extra instructional assistance this year (other than Special Education, Title I, or Bilingual/ESL programs) to help him/her master the grade-level curriculum?

Yes	No
43% (2,476)	57% (3,319)

If you replied "YES" for this student, please indicate **each** form of assistance provided.

Mentoring	19% (471)
Extra tutoring	86% (2,130)
Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP), in summer 1997	8% (188)
Other	28% (694)

3. At least once a week, does this student use a computer as part of . . .

	Yes	No
the mathematics program?	75% (4,341)	25% (1,427)
the language arts program?	80% (4,653)	20% (1,169)
the science program?	12% (686)	88% (4,861)
the social studies program?	13% (705)	87% (4,844)

4. Please mark your best estimation of this student's **current** level of functioning in each area listed below.

	Above Third Grade Level	On Third Grade Level	Below Third Grade Level
Oral reading proficiency	28% (1,638)	48% (2,750)	24% (1,363)
Reading comprehension	28% (1,587)	45% (2,568)	28% (1,577)

5. Please provide your best professional assessment of how many Grade 3 essential elements this student has mastered **to date** in each of the areas listed below.

	All	Most	About Half	Few	None
English Language Arts	31% (1,798)	42% (2,421)	15% (875)	10% (596)	2% (100)
Mathematics	34% (1,963)	43% (2,525)	13% (782)	8% (470)	2% (85)
Science	31% (1,821)	48% (2,803)	12% (669)	7% (411)	2% (84)
Social Studies	31% (1,803)	49% (2,843)	11% (659)	7% (410)	2% (86)
Fine Arts	40% (2,254)	45% (2,572)	10% (562)	5% (262)	1% (50)
Physical Education	44% (2,489)	46% (2,590)	7% (387)	3% (165)	1% (46)
Health	38% (2,208)	46% (2,675)	9% (544)	5% (267)	1% (74)

6. Which term best describes the **overall** progress made by this student since the beginning of the year?

Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor
17% (982)	23% (1,325)	42% (2,471)	14% (820)	4% (209)

7. Please indicate your best professional judgment regarding this student's grade level promotion status at the end of the school year.

Should be promoted to Grade 4: 82% (4,770)
Should be placed in Grade 4: 12% (691)
Should be retained in Grade 3: 5% (281)
Other: 1% (56)

8a. Was this student referred for special education assessment or to the Special Needs (504) Committee this school year?

Yes	No
11% (656)	89% (5,153)

8b. Was this student referred for language assessment this school year?

Yes	No
10% (563)	90% (5,234)

Context Information

9. Did you complete a parent-teacher conference with this student's parents or guardians during this school year?

Yes	No
92% (5,228)	8% (460)

10. Using the rating scale below, please rate this student on each of the following classroom behaviors.

Behavior	All of the Time	Most of the Time	About Half of the Time	Less Than Half of the Time	None of the Time
Seeks appropriate assistance from adults at school	26% (1,526)	44% (2,544)	16% (947)	12% (677)	2% (128)
Fears making mistakes in completing assignments	4% (206)	10% (599)	18% (1,055)	39% (2,249)	29% (1,704)
Has been physically aggressive towards peers	1% (48)	4% (202)	6% (343)	20% (1,136)	70% (4,079)
Participates in class activities and interacts with classmates	38% (2,195)	41% (2,416)	13% (769)	7% (417)	1% (32)
Demonstrates adequate self-help skills in learning	28% (1,610)	39% (2,261)	18% (1,030)	13% (786)	3% (153)
Readily makes and maintains friendships with classmates	41% (2,418)	40% (2,329)	12% (689)	6% (336)	1% (60)

Discipline

11. Over the course of the year, how many times has this student been . . .

Referred outside the classroom for disciplinary action?

Never	Once	Twice	Three or More Times
78% (4,552)	9% (506)	5% (304)	8% (453)

Suspended from school?

Never	Once	Twice	Three or More Times
97% (5,586)	2% (87)	1% (25)	1% (55)

12a. Has this student been placed in an alternative learning setting for disciplinary reasons during any part of this school year?

Yes	No
5% (280)	95% (5,416)

If you answered "NO" to question 12a, you do not need to answer the following two items.

12b. Which of the following best represents the type of alternative setting involved? *Select all that apply.*

In-school suspension center: 87% (244)
Alternative campus: 4% (10)
Other: 16% (45)
Do not know: 1% (1)

12c. For approximately how long was this student educated in the alternative setting?

Less than 1 day: 28% (78)
1 to 10 days: 67% (184)
11 to 20 days: 1% (1)
21 or more days: 3% (9)

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

STEPS Project
Division of Research and Evaluation
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
512/463-9701

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GLOSSARY

District type. Districts are classified on a scale ranging from *major urban* to *rural*. Size, growth rate, and proximity to urban areas determine the appropriate group. *Charter school* districts constitute a category that does not use these criteria.

Major urban are the largest school districts in the state, serving the six metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Austin, and El Paso. A district is designated *major urban* if the county population is greater than 650,000, it is the largest in the county, and there are greater than 35 percent low-income students in the school district. If a district is not the largest in the county, it is classified *major urban* if the number of students is 75 percent of the largest district and there are more than 35 percent low-income students in the district.

A *major suburban* district is contiguous to a *major urban* district and the number of students in membership is at least 3 percent of the *major urban* district. If a district is not contiguous to a *major urban* area, then an enrollment of 15 percent of the *major urban* district or an enrollment of at least 4,500 is required to be classified as a *major suburban* district.

A district is designated as *other central city* if the district is not contiguous to one of the *major urban* districts, the county population is between 100,000 and 650,000, and it is the largest district in the county or its population is 75 percent of the largest district.

An *other central city suburban* district is in a county with a population of between 100,000 and 650,000, and the number of students in membership is at least 15 percent of the largest district in the county. If a district is contiguous to a *central city* district, has a population greater than 3 percent of that district's, and the number of students in membership is greater than the corresponding median figure for the state, it is also *central city suburban*.

A district is considered an *independent town* district if it is in a county having a population of 25,000 to 100,000, or if the number of students in membership is greater than 75 percent of the largest district.

Non-metropolitan, fast-growing districts are those that do not fit in any of the above categories have at least 300 students enrolled, and exhibit a five-year growth rate of at least 20 percent.

Non-metropolitan, stable districts are those that do not fit in any of the above categories and have an enrollment exceeding the state median.

Rural districts are those that do not fit in any of the above categories. *Rural* districts have an enrollment of less than 300; or an enrollment between 300 and the state median and a growth rate less than 20 percent.

Campus accountability rating. Each campus in Texas receives an annual accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency.[2] The accountability system for 1995 used performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in the spring of 1995, annual dropout rates for 1993-94, and student attendance rates for 1993-94, as the base indicators to determine campus ratings. The general conditions for the 1995 ratings were:

Rating	TAAS Score	Dropout Rate	Attendance Rate
Exemplary	≥ 90%	≤ 1.0%	≥ 94%
Recognized	70-89%	1.1-3.5%	≥ 94%
Acceptable	25-69%	3.6-6.0%	No requirement
Low-performing	≤ 25%	≥ 6.0%	No requirement

Not rated campuses are prekindergarten, kindergarten, or early education centers that do not have ratings because standardized tests are not available at those grade levels. *Not applicable* indicates first-year charter schools and schools for which data are insufficient. Alternative education campuses are rated as *alternative education—acceptable* or *alternative education—needs peer review*.

[2] Texas Education Agency, *Accountability Manual: The 1994-95 accountability rating system for Texas public schools and school districts* (Austin, TX: Author, 1994).

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1972; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986; AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.

The Texas Education Agency shall comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any educational programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or disability constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

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